DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 697 SO 010 043

AUTHOR Trickett, Edison J.
TITLE Normative Classroom Environments for Adolescent Socialization: Contrasting Cultures of Five Types of Public Secondary Schools.
PUB DATE 20 Mar 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at Biannual Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (New Orleans, Louisiana, March 20, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Alternative Schools; *Classroom Environment; *Comparative Analysis; *High Schools; Public Schools; Research Methodology; Rural Schools; Secondary Education; *Socialization; Statistical Analysis; *Student School Relationship; *Student Teacher Relationship; Suburban Schools; Urban Schools; Vocational Schools

ABSTRACT

The study, focusing on the high school classroom as an important socialization setting, provides data on the similarity and differences of classrooms in five different types of public schools. The classroom environment was broken down into three domains: authority function of the teacher, friendship function of the teacher, and student-student relationships. These areas of the classroom environment were assessed by the Classroom Environment Scale, a 90-item forced choice student-answered scale which purports to measure nine dimensions of the classroom. Data from this scale were gathered in five types of high schools in Connecticut: urban, suburban, rural, vocational, and alternative high schools. Over 6,000 students participated in the study. Statistical analysis of the data showed that alternative schools have strong peer and teacher relationships; vocational schools are low in the area of teacher support; urban and alternative schools are highly task oriented; vocational schools emphasize competition; and suburban schools are low in teacher authority and rule clarity. Because of the differences in environments, one can infer that students at the various schools undergo different socialization experiences and have different socialization outcomes. (Author/AV

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

MAY 23 1977

ED139697

Normative Classroom Environments for Adolescent Socialization: Contrasting Cultures of Five Types of Public Secondary Schools[1]

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Edison J. Trickett
Yale University

At the present time, several areas of psychology are converging in the area of the conceptualization and assessment of human environments. Environmental psychologists have demonstrated linkages between physical and architectural design variables and interaction patterns among individuals. Ecologically oriented community psychologists have honed in on person-environment interaction as a central research focus. This orientation is further elaborated in educational psychology by the work of Cronbach and Snow (1977) on Aptitude-Treatment instructional interactions. And increasingly, psychologists interested in child development have centered their attention on how to conceptualize and assess such socialization settings as the home, the Head Start program, or the institutions for retarded children. The purpose of the present paper is to contribute to the substance of this discussion by focusing on one important socialization setting--the high school classroom--describing it as an environment, and presenting data on how the classrooms in five different types of public schools are normatively similar and different. From these normative portraits we can begin to draw implications for the socialization norms and processes which presumably affect adolescents in these schools.

SO 010 043

---

[1]Paper presented at the bi-annual meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, March 20, 1977, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Description of the Classroom Psychosocial Environment

Information about the social environment of the high school classroom was obtained from the Classroom Environment Scale (CES), a 90 item forced choice student-answered instrument which measures the emphasis placed on each of nine classroom dimensions. These nine dimensions--found in Handout #1--are seen as falling into three conceptual domains. The first three dimensions--Involvement, Affiliation, and Support--are conceptualized as Relationship dimensions, assessing the level of involvement and interpersonal support among students and between students and teachers. The second group of dimensions are Goal Orientation or Personal Development dimensions, measuring the emphasis placed on those aspects of the classroom which relate to its learning goals (e.g. the Task Orientation and Competition dimensions). The final set of dimensions include Order and Organization, Rule Clarity, Teacher Control, and Innovation. These measure System Maintenance and System Change dimensions and tap information about the authority structure and organization of the class as well as its emphasis on trying innovative teaching approaches. The classroom score on each of the nine dimensions consists of the averaged student scores within the class. Thus, the classroom environment is defined by the averaged perceptions of students; it is the perceived environment.

Selection of Schools and Classrooms

Data on which this study is based comes from a collection of studies conducted over a four year period (1972-1976) in Connecticut. The total sample includes 409 high school classes with 6,141 students

in over 30 different public high schools. Of these 409 classes, 123 were from urban schools, 46 from suburban, 99 in rural, 99 in vocational, and 42 in alternative high schools. Classes varied in academic content, grade level, and size.

There is reason to believe that these schools are representative of their types of schools in the state, though only the rural and vocational schools were randomly selected. Urban and suburban schools were selected for reasons of convenience to the researcher--however, they all had reputations for being rather typical comprehensive high schools. The alternative schools were "schools without walls" serving urban populations. In all the schools except one, selection of classes was done either randomly or using a stratified design so that the fundamental content areas of English, Math, Languages, Physical Science, and Social Science would be necessarily represented in the data. Thus, within each school and within each type of school data was gathered on a quite representative sample of classrooms.

Results

The CES was scored for each of the nine dimensions in each classroom by averaging the individual student scores for each dimension. This yielded nine scores per classroom. Classes were then grouped according to school, and a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted on the nine dimensions and the five types of school. Results from the MANOVA supported the notion that the five types of schools show complex and differentiating patterns of classroom environment.

To understand these differences more precisely, classrooms were grouped according to type of school and one way ANOVA's were done on

each of the nine CES dimensions. Each of these analyses was significant to the .001 level. In presenting the nature and direction of the differences among types of schools, the data is divided into the three domains of classroom experience previously mentioned: (1) personal relationship dimensions; (2) goal orientation or personal development dimensions; and (3) system maintenance and system change dimensions. Figures 1,2, and 3 present this data. Let me briefly mention some of the striking differences.

(1) Personal Relationship dimensions: In the realm of the relationship dimensions (Figure 1) alternative schools are far and away the highest. In addition to a strong general feeling of involvement, both peer and teacher relationships show a strong emphasis. In the area of Teacher Support suburban school classrooms are quite high and vocational school classes quite low.

(2) Goal Orientation Dimensions: The dimensions of Task Orientation and Competition define this domain of classroom life (Figure 2). Results for Task Orientation--somewhat surprising in terms of popular stereotype--place urban and alternative schools on top. In terms of Competition, vocational schools show the highest emphasis, while alternative schools clearly de-emphasize this aspect of the classroom.

(3) System Maintenance and Change Dimensions: System Maintenance and Change dimensions are found in Figure 3. Again it is the vocational and alternative schools which provide the most outstanding contrasts. Alternative school classrooms are highest in Order and Organization and Innovation, while being lowest in Teacher Control. Vocational school classrooms, on the other hand, are highest in the teacher

authority domains of Rule Clarity and Teacher Control. In contrast to vocational schools suburban schools are quite low in these areas.

Discussion

It is difficult in the allotted time to do more than hint at some of the implications of this line of research. It is clear, for example, that differences occur in the average expectable classroom environment found in the five types of schools in the present study. Alternative and Vocational schools present the clearest study in contrasts. True to th[redacted]neral underlying ideologies, the alternative schools have classrooms which stress the interpersonal aspects of student-student and teacher-student relationships. The socialization of interpersonal values and the quality of personal relationships seemingly receive more explicit attention in these schools than in other types of schools. Contrary to popular stereotype, the data does not indicate that alternative school classes are wild, uncontrollable events--indeed they are perceived to be rather well-organized and task-oriented. They do, however, reflect a clear anti-authority and anti-competitive ideology. Vocational schools present quite a different picture--lowest in Teacher Support of all types of schools and highest in competition and the exercise of strict teacher authority in the classroom.

Reasons for these kinds of differences are obviously multiple, and highlight the underlying issue of what goes into making an environment the kind of place it is. Alternative and vocational schools, for example, share at least two characteristics which set them apart from urban, rural, and suburban schools: (1) they were created

with the most distinct institutional missions--one primarily ideological and one educational, and (2) their students are individuals who actively chose to attend these particular types of schools. How these variables affect the nature of the school environment is an important kind of question raised by this normative data.

The portraits of the normative classrooms in different types of schools also have relevance to various theoretical issues in adolescent development. By demonstrating systematic classroom differences among types of schools, it allows the reasonable inference that adolescents undergoing these various "treatments" should have different socialization experiences and, consequently, different socialization outcomes. Further, by providing multidimensional portraits of environments, one can assess how specific aspects of normative classroom environments relate to such varied outcomes as achievement, self-esteem, and orientation to the future.

It should be clear that while the present study used type of school as an organizing concept, two or more schools of the same type can be studied with a comparable methodology. It should also be clear that--though presenting normative descriptive data--I wish to avoid any inclination toward stereotyping schools according to type. Not only was there the usual variability among schools within type in terms of the CES data, this data itself but scratches the surface of the complicated and varied nature of the social environment of any school. The ways in which social structures affect and are affected by individuals are multiple and difficult to unravel. My purpose today has been to present one approach toward one part of the puzzle.

The data is powerful in suggesting how and where we might increase our understanding of the environments affecting adolescent development and, in the process, generate a more ecologically valid knowledge about the range of influences on adolescent development. Out of this research orientation can come ideas which may be useful in creating institutions sensitive to the varying developmental needs and aspirations of young people. It can provide a conceptual link between a psychology of persons and a psychology of socializing institutions. This is a worthy challenge indeed.

MAY 23 1977

Classroom Environment Scale (CES)

Form D

Description of Subscales

1. Involvement: Measures the extent to which students pay attention to and show interest in the activities of the class.
Students put a lot of energy into what they do here. (T)
Students daydream a lot in this class. (F)

2. Affiliation: Measures the extent to which students work with and come to know each other within the classroom.
Students in this class get to know each other really well. (T)
There are groups of students who don't get along in this class. (F)

3. Support: Measures the extent to which the teacher expresses a personal interest in the students.
The teacher goes out of his way to help students. (T)
Sometimes the teacher embarrasses students for not knowing the right answer. (F)

4. Task Orientation: Measures the extent to which the activities of the class are centered around the accomplishment of specified academic objectives.
Almost all class time is spent on the lesson for the day. (T)
This teacher often takes time out from the lesson plan to talk about other things. (F)

5. Competition: Measures the amount of emphasis on academic competition within the class.
Students try hard to get the best grade. (T)
Students usually pass even if they don't do much. (F)

6. Order and Organization: Measures the emphasis within the classroom on maintenance of order and the degree to which the activities of the class are well organized.
Activities in this class are clearly and carefully planned. (T)
The teacher often has to tell students to calm down. (F)

7. Rule Clarity: Measures the degree to which the rules for conduct in the classroom are explicitly stated and clearly understood.
The teacher explains what will happen if a student breaks a rule. (T)
Rules in this class seem to change a lot. (F)

8. Teacher Control: Measures the degree to which student conduct in the classroom is delimited by the enforcement of rules.
When the teacher makes a rule, he means it. (T)
The teacher is not very strict. (F)

9. Innovation: Measures the extent to which different modes of teaching and classroom interaction take place in the class.
What students do in class is very different on different days. (T)
Students do the same kind of homework almost every day. (F)

Figure 1

Relationship Dimensions: Five Types of School

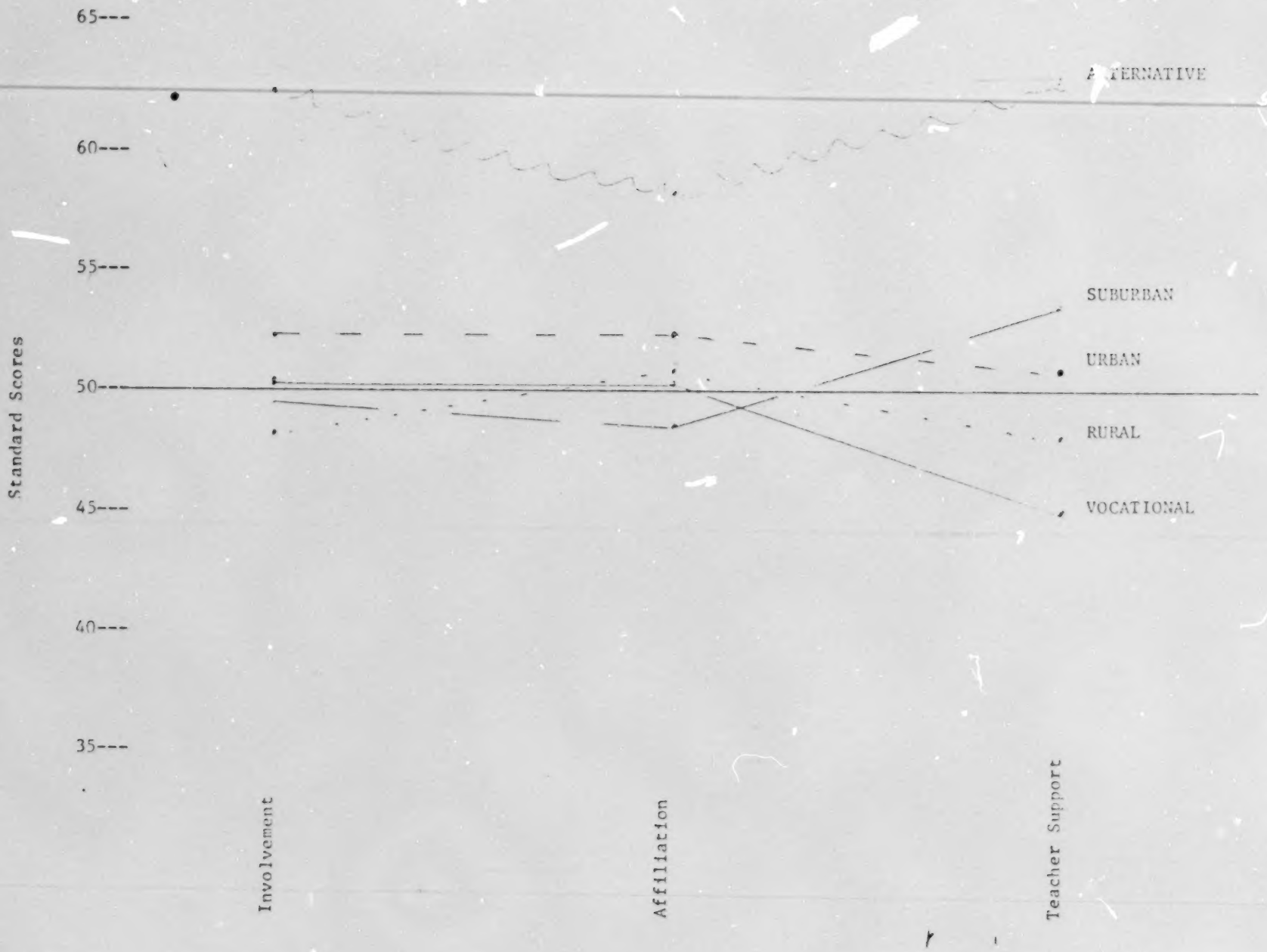

Figure 2

Goal Orientation Dimensions: Five Types of School

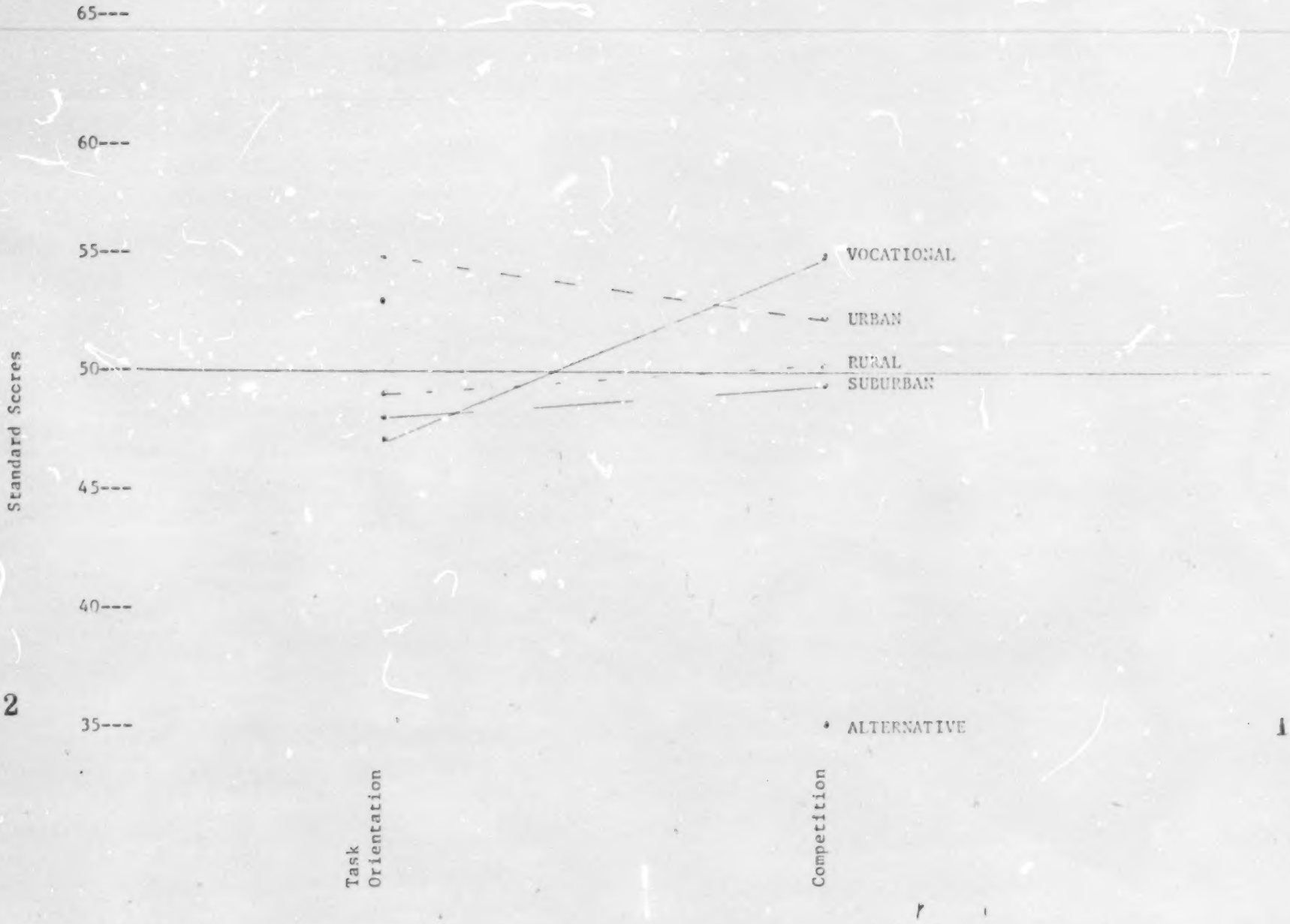

Figure 3

System Maintenance and System Change Dimensions: Five Types of School